

*Indexed -*

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Subject: The Faith of Love.

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# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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# THE FAITH OF LOVE.

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“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”—  
Jno. xx. 29.

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We shall not immediately comment upon this passage, although it is the axis upon which the thoughts of the discourse will turn. We shall come to it in the regular sequence of the history of the events which took place upon the morning of the resurrection. The whole scene which followed the resurrection, and which is sketched in the Gospel, is one not simply of transcendent beauty—one which indicates great dramatic power, without a parallel ; but it is one which, the more it be studied, the more familiar we become with it, the more admirable it seems. In what one of the Greek dramas, in what one of Shakespeare’s dramas, are there such elements ? Where, in dramatic writings, is there such a whirl of all human passions and events, as those that shook tumultuous Jerusalem, the day before, and during the trial of the Saviour ? Such a scene, on such a background as the crucifixion, and such a scene following, transcend, inconceivably, the boldest thing that ever was dreamed of. The attempt to represent so tremendous a period as the three days preceding and including the crucifixion of our Saviour, and his resurrection, is without an equal. There have been notions floating in the world of incarnations ; but they were mostly monstrous and grotesque, and they were without moral aim or purport largely, for the worst of reasons—passional, degrading, corrupting. But when and where before was there a conception of the paternity of God ? When and where before was there a conception of God, out of the fullness of time, at last dawning through the darkness of this world and coming into it, to be a Brother, and a Friend, and a Guide, and a Saviour, and God manifest in the flesh, for the whole race ?

That is the phenomenon, and that is the drama, that is to be enacted—how such a being should live ; how he should approach the hour of death ; how he should deport himself in the trial



through which he went; how he should come forth from the sepulchre. And in reading this sublime drama of history, one is struck with the unconscious and exquisite skill with which the terrible scenes of which it is made up are relieved.

It was a canon of Greek art, never to represent pain and horror with such prominence as, on the whole, to overcome the sense of pleasure produced by the drama, picture or sculpture. It is a sound rule of art. And although the recorders of these scenes had no ideal of a drama before their mind, and were recording simply a history, if they had been instructed in Athens, they could not more skillfully have brought in the points of light and relief over against what otherwise would have been unredeemed horror.

Such little touches as those which were given after the Saviour had gone forth upon the way—as, for instance, the outburst and tender greeting of the women—not only threw a light on his feelings, but also relieved our feelings, which would otherwise have been wrought to too great a tension. When he is crucified, no details are given. The most shocking details of the crucifixion have been given in history, and have been given in sermons; but the inspired penmen merely speak of the events, and go into no particulars. There is no casting of him down. There is no stretching out of the hands. There is no piercing of the feet with the nails. There is no sound of hammers. There are none of these circumstances which a spurious history has doubtless magnified. The record says, “They crucified him”—that is all. And it is sublime in its nakedness and simplicity, as well as beautiful in the exquisiteness of its art.

Connected with his crucifixion, there has always been a relief to me in the self-possession which was indicated. They put a sponge upon a reed, with vinegar, mixed with myrrh. That is, wine and myrrh were mixed, and used for the purpose of an anæsthetic, to deaden sensibility. It was something that was given as we give chloroform. He tasted it, but would not take it. He smiled it away. He preferred to go through his sufferings in the possession of his unobstructed faculties. That calm superiority in the hour of extreme anguish, always diffused a light and relief over my mind.

And then, there was the scene of that touching conversation between the Saviour and the thief. Who else would have dreamed of such a scene as that? Who would have dared to attempt it? Who that attempted it could ever have accomplished it? And yet, as it stands, it is full of relief, and full of beauty—of beauty where you least would have expected it, in the anguish of crucifixion.

Then, look at the tender farewell which he addressed to his mother. Most simple, most natural, and most unostentatious, was it; and

yet, there it stands, an exquisite flower, blossoming at the foot of the cross.

Look, also, at the self-control, the love and the divinity, with which he breathed a prayer of sympathy and forgiveness on those that were murdering him. Nor is there wanting a certain relief to the tragic nature of the scene, in the groups that surrounded the cross. On the one side was the group of women, whose courage in that hour was a courage of love and sympathy, which rose superior to the zeal and courage of manhood. For the men shrunk away, and held themselves at a safe distance—with one exception: that of the feminine disciple, John. He stood faithful. Over against the women were groups of the Roman soldiers, gambling at the foot of the cross. They had done their work, and while waiting they were dividing the Saviour's garments. They threw dice to see who should have the whole one; and the others they separated. And it is said that they sat down and watched him. Here were these contrasting groups—the women on the one side, and the hoary gamblers on the other, the one watching with tender eyes of love, and the other with hard eyes of cruelty.

And so, while the central Figure is never lost, while we never for one moment waver in our interest in him, all these unconscious and unintended touches relieve the stress of feeling; and we read again, and again, and again, and never are tired of reading, this matchless scene of the crucifixion of Christ.

I suppose the finer our natures become, and the more delicate are the rules of criticism which we bring to bear upon this history of the last hours of God manifest in the flesh, the better it will stand the test of criticism, and the more surely it will come out evidently inspired.

Where else, in any drama, is there an attempt to depict a God coming from the grave as a human suggestion? It is simply audacious. Yet, if you will look at this, you will, I think, be struck with the skill (not purposed skill), with the rare art, in the best and highest use of that term, that is manifested in the conduct of this part of the history. It is not a slight circumstance, in my judgment, that the resurrection of Christ is not painted at all; that there is no attempt made to paint it. The Saviour is presented to us as lying calm as marble. Nor is there a description of the first stirrings or ever he came forth at the angel-touch. There is no depicting of these things. All that we know is that when the morning dawned, and they went into the sepulchre to find him, he was not there.

And it is a beautiful transition to our conception, that angels are introduced into the tomb. The management of spirits has always

been the test of genius; but where can you find such management of spirits as here? Where can you find angelic appearances so fit? Where can you find demeanor so admirable? Where can you find words so noble? For, while angels are represented as singing at the advent of the Saviour, they are represented as sitting silent in the sepulchre. Two, there were; and we may imagine one the angel of Hope, and the other the angel of Memory; as if the angel at the feet were tracing the history of Christ as "a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief," while the angel at the head was looking for the joy that was before him, and into which he was about to enter? Where can you find so fit an appearance of angels? There is no machinery; there is no ostentation; there is no undue prominence given to this feature of the scene. It was just sketched in with a single stroke.

And then, the appearance of the Saviour is not represented so much by describing *him*, as by describing the effect which was produced upon the minds of those who were cognizant, of his resurrection.

This is rare art, and it would take the finest skill to carry it out, were it left to skill. We shall not find, in all this history, a single mis-stroke. The most stupenduous thing to be done, is done freely, and strongly, and perfectly; and yet it is done without a mistake. Not a line could be obliterated. There is not one misadjustment. It agrees entirely with all that we know. The more critical we are, the better. All we know of human nature is met, and we are more than pleased—we are surprised—at every step.

Take the picture, for instance, of serenity. I do not know where I get that feeling; but as I read this connected history, it seems to me as though the crucifixion was like one of those summer thunderstorms that we have, in which all the heavens appear to be full of darkness, and conflict, and turmoil. The terrible thunder-cracks that roll through the darkness; the great striving winds that now tug at the trees which groan under their hands, and that now beat on the house; the hissing rain; all the wild commotion of the elements—these fill the soul full of imaginations and strange terrors. And yet, we sleep (I used to, as a child), and wake, and sleep; and when the morning comes, there is not a cloud in the air. It is as if the heavens were one vast bowl, or goblet, filled with the wine of life. And the sun seems steeping the very heavens. Not a leaf moves except when a drop of water falls from it and changes its equipoise. And all the birds sing, and all voices seem jubilant, and all the earth seems refreshed and more beautiful. And so it affects me when I read of the tumult of the crucifixion on Calvary, and the after quiet.



For then, there are the scenes of the garden—the ministration of angels; the sweet surprise of the different groups that came to the sepulchre. It is all tranquil. It is all joyful. Previous to that event there had been tumult, from the time of Christ's appearance on the earth; but when once he has passed the portals of the tomb; when once he has come forth from the sepulchre, it is all serene; it is all sweet. It is as it should be. Now we can see it. The Saviour has risen; and all the signs and tokens of his presence are gladness and radiance and peace.

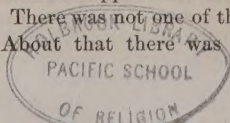
There is an utter absence, I have said, of any stage effect. The impression which Jesus makes is that of one who is hovering between this life and the life to come. He is of the earth, manifestly; he wears a body; he has the appetites; he eats, he drinks, and he walks; he has flesh and bones, the genuineness of which he expressly told his disciples to ascertain for themselves; and yet there is an air of distance about him. He is not as familiar to us as before his crucifixion. He seems to touch nothing with that same human sense of feeling that he once did. There is a sort of sacredness about him, as though he were on the way up to his spiritual condition. There is a certain ethereality which works strangeness, not expressed by any formal statement, but coming upon us unconsciously from the artless narrative.

He first meets the group of women who are on their way to Jerusalem, and says, "All hail!" Then he meets Mary, who is bewildered in the garden, and brings her to a consciousness of his presence. Next, he overtakes certain disciples walking to Emmaus, and discourses to them in a manner that seems to them very strange—weird, even. Afterward, he makes himself known to them at the breaking of bread in the house, and then disappears. And they, hurrying, rush back to Jerusalem, and there gather the disciples together in a chamber apart, for fear of the Jews, and he is present with them, and makes himself known to them.

Then, there is that strange scene on the shores of the lake of Galilee, where he calls in the fishermen that have returned from their toil, and speaks with them. There is also the mountain scene, where some five hundred gather together and believe on him—"but some doubted."

The account of the ascension is matchless in grandeur and simplicity; and it would have been hazardous for Shakespeare to attempt to depict such a scene. He would have been left far behind.

Look at the fact of the sudden appearance of Christ to his disciples after his crucifixion. There was not one of them who doubted that he had been slain. About that there was no question. In



general, you will find that there was an intense bewilderment, resulting from alternating emotions. Yet, there was no extravagance in the conduct of any of them. There was nothing artificial or strange in their demeanor. If this had been a made-up history, what efforts would men have made to depict the effect produced upon the different temperaments and the different constitutional peculiarities of these disciples! And yet, there is no effort of this kind. There is no artificial limning. We see just what we might have expected to see, and what we ought to have expected to see.

I have alluded to the historic management of the scene in the tomb. I have alluded to the meeting of the disciples with the angels. But see how, at the meeting of the disciples with the Saviour, the different avenues of conviction were opened in them severally. That peculiar experience is described in which there is a violent strife, and an unbelief, by reason of the alternations of joy and of fear. And this is graphically set forth in a few words:

"And they departed quickly from the sepulchre [having heard what the angels said], with fear and great joy; [for they trembled and were amazed. Neither said they anything to any man. They were unconscious of anybody around them, so intense was their inward feeling; for they were afraid,] and did run to bring his disciples word; and as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail."

And in the instant this wild excitement, this tumult of hope and of joy and of fear, culminated in conviction. And they fell down on the ground before him.

"They came and held him by the feet, and worshiped him."

And yet, they were trembling all over, full of awe; and Jesus saw it.

"Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."

Then see what a beautiful touch there is of human nature, and one that no man ever would have thought of who was making up this history. I mean that little characteristic scene between John and Peter. They heard, you know, some tidings about Christ's disappearance from the sepulchre, and they started and ran to the garden. They had a race; and John beat Peter. John could not disguise his joy: he had to put it in his own narrative that he beat Peter. Now, I do not think anybody making up a history of this event would have put in that circumstance. And yet, I am glad it is in this narrative. On the whole, I am glad that John beat Peter.

"Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple [as John always called himself], and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together [neck and neck, for awhile]; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And, he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the



napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself."

I never could imagine why there should have been all that particularity of telling where the grave-clothes lay. I never could make it seem that there was any object in it. It was the habit of men, in telling a thing which they had seen, to tell it just as they saw it. If they were making up a history of the event, they would not, perhaps, stop to put in all these little circumstances; but if they were describing the scene as they saw it, they would put them in, and let folks make out of them what they could.

There is another scene in connection with the first appearing of Christ after his resurrection, where there is a remarkable manifestation of grief and of love, which seems to me in many respects the most exquisite scene in literature. It is that which is narrated of Mary in the garden. There is the unbelief of sorrow, and there is the believing of love:

"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalen." "Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain."

Blessed are they who weep, and who in their grief look into the sepulchre, and who are wise and inspired to see angels, even in the tomb.

"And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith to her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."

Even his death was more precious to her than the life of any other creature.

"Jesus [throwing all the old-time love into his voice] saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and said unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master."

She did not see his hand, nor his side; but ah! that tone—she had heard it before, and it struck the old chord of love; and no music could compare with that. There was just this one breathing of her name, and love knew him, and sprang to life and to joy.

There is another scene, where we see the conflict of fear. It is one that took place after the disciples had walked with the Saviour to Emmaus. They had seen him; and they went back to Jerusalem and revealed their experience to the disciples that were gathered together there. The doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews. So we see them huddled together in

a secret place, in the utmost obscurity, doubtless whispering rather than talking.

"And as they sat at meat, they [these disciples from Emmaus] told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen; and he saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

He comforts them, just as a mother comforts an affrighted child, soothing its fear, and bringing it to the object which it dreads, and making it look at it and handle it.

"Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord."

Of course they were. What simplicity to put that in! and yet, how beautiful it is, being put in!

"And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?"

First, they would not believe from fear; and yet they did believe. They believed, and yet they could not believe, because it was so joyful.

Have you never had this experience yourself? Have you never said, "This is too good to be true"? Have you never been so happy that you pinched yourself to see whether you were not asleep? Have you never wished to test the reality of what you believed?

How continually has it struck me, and how it strikes me yet, what simplicity of instruments and means there is in this narrative, and how little expenditure there is of machinery! Indeed, there is no machinery in it. It is desultory, almost. It certainly is unstudied and unconscious.

There is one more instance which is of interest in connection with this event—that which relates to Thomas, with a portion of whose history I opened this discourse. After this scene of the disciples in the secret room in Jerusalem, where it is said that Thomas was not present, other disciples said unto him, "We have seen the Lord." No man can tell the exultation which must have gone with the utterance of that simple declaration, "We have seen the Lord."

Now, Thomas was a man of reason; he was a philosopher. He had no objection whatever to believing; but he wanted proof; and he wanted the proof to be of a particular kind. And when all the disciples were aglow, he was unmoved. He knew them; he knew their nature; he knew their veracity; he could not but have known that their testimony was sufficient, at least, to create a joyful presumption. But with a sort of conceit and loftiness, as much as to say, "They may be imposed upon, but I cannot be," he said,

"Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

It is as if he had said, "I must be present when I am convinced; and it must be according to my mind and my nature, and not by sympathy, that the evidence shall come."

"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you."

How singularly full of peace Christ was, both in the last hours preceding his crucifixion, and afterward, every time that he met his disciples!

"Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing."

"It was too much for poor Thomas. He cried out,

"My Lord and my God!"

Well, Thomas was a good fellow, after all. He did not mean any harm. He had a heart in him. He only had a touch of vanity. He was not going to believe because others did. Jesus came to him with that sweetness, and tenderness, and beautifulness: and the moment he saw Jesus, he could not resist another instant, and he cried out,

"My Lord and my God."

Thank Thomas for that.

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen me, and yet have believed."

This is not a rebuke of the desire to have physical evidence of physical facts, at all; nor is it a rebuke of Thomas for desiring to identify the Saviour past all mistake; but it seems to me that there was an inward feeling which inspired that rebuke of Christ. It is as if he had said, "After living so many years with me; after experiencing the intimacy and the enduring love that you have; after knowing all that you have known, was there nothing in your hope, was there nothing in your love, was there nothing in the probabilities of the history of my bearing toward the other disciples, was there nothing in you that was touched by their testimony?" It was a reproach to the love of Thomas. Christ as much as said, "If ye had loved me, Thomas, as I have loved you, you would have needed no other evidence. The intuition of love would have made you sure, when you heard one and another and another bear testimony that I, your Lord and Master, had risen."

The scene, looked at in this light, is inexpressibly beautiful to me. I am touched by this appeal of the Saviour for belief to the deepest part of our nature, and not to the eyes nor the hands. Though these are proper instruments to be employed in ascertain-



ing the truth, yet, as between friends, the heart ought to interpret. As between friends, testimony ought to be received, and cold proofs of a physical nature ought not to be insisted upon.

Time would fail me to go into all the details of this matchless part of the history, covering the first few days after the resurrection of Christ; but I ask you whether, if you look at it closely, you can conceive of anything more transcendent? Can you conceive of the revelation of a risen Christ to his disciples, under circumstances more fit, and in ways that would touch more perfectly your sense of poetry, your sense of affection, your sense of dignity, or your sense of fidelity to duty? Is it not rare in limning, and exquisite in coloring; and chiefly, is it not striking for simplicity? And how much of effect is brought out with how little effort! For, one might read over all this history of the few days after the resurrection of Christ, in certain moods, and be little affected by it; one might go through the whole of it, in an external state, and not have a single point strike him; but the moment that a man comes into a state of real susceptibility, the moment that his higher feelings are developed, it is full of meaning, and its contents are not less than marvelous to him.

Well, then, is this a fictitious history? Is it a myth? One of the recent theories by which the authenticity of the Gospels is sought to be done away with, is that there were certain occurrences, that these occurrences were magnified in the eyes of the people, that they were recorded thus magnified, and that they were handed down to a later period as real facts of history; whereas, they were only a bundle of myths. But where before was there ever a mythical history that so far outran the best things which philosophy or art could do? Where before was there ever a history born, as it is said, by the brooding of superstition or ignorance among the common people, which was able to unfold such a transcendent vision of the Divine Being, under circumstances so critical, and where, to follow nature, would so mark the highest efforts of genius, if it were the work of genius alone?

But if this be simply the recital of facts, then what must those facts have been? If the narrative, in its almost ragged artlessness, with the various elements thrown together without any attempt to produce a scenic or tragic effect is so transcendently beautiful, what must the scenes themselves have been! And what an unanswerable argument is here, to those that can appreciate it, of the authenticity of this part of the history of our Lord and Saviour!

Now, for ourselves, there is, in the first place, the historical argument for Christ, which is good, and to be studied. It is neither

to be undervalued nor to be made too much of. It is the appeal of exterior facts to the interior reason. It is the same argument with which we ply the documents that remain of the history of Rome, or of the history of Greece, or of the history of the Oriental Empire. All the Gospels submit themselves to the same historic tests. Nor ought we to fear. For there is that in these narratives which will defy destruction. So much that is beautiful, so much that yet transcends our power to conceive by the imagination, so much that is in the highest degree superhuman, is there, that it is incredible, utterly, that it should not have happened. Historic tests and processes brought to bear upon the text of the New Testament may for a time cloud it, may for a time disturb the regularity of men's belief in it, but in the end they cannot but confirm this history of a supernatural event.

I would not, then, undervalue your reading of historical arguments for proof of the reality of Christ's life, and of the events connected with it, and recorded of it; but there is to be found here evidence of the divinity of Christ without this external historical argument. There is that to which the Saviour himself alludes, in his appeal to Thomas, to whom he said, as it were, "You believe because you have seen me. You have had sensuous evidence [the equivalent of historical evidence]; you have believed according to ordinary rules of belief, by which men judge of lower truths—truths of fact, and truths of science. Blessed are they that believe, not having seen. Blessed are they that have had such a recognition of the divine element, that they believed, not simply by physical or historical proof, but by their own moral intuition and inward perception." The evidence which rises above all others, is that of personal experience. The highest faculties are concerned in it—and in their holiest hours. It is the testimony of our very best manhood in its ripest conditions. Not when we are turmoiled in the world, not when pride is striving, not when our lower nature is in the ascendancy, do we ever show sensibility to evidence in respect to the divinity of Christ. It is impossible, in a war of words, in a conflict of arguments, in the jealousies and hatreds which come up between men, to reach the highest evidence of Christ's divinity. But when once life has, as it were, not for fear of the Jews, but for fear of evil, shrunk back into a room by itself; when we are gathered, as the disciples were, where Christ is accustomed to meet us—then it is that he comes and says personally to us, "Peace be unto you." It is in those hours when we have the advantage of our best nature in the best circumstances, that Christ manifests himself to us. That is the time when the best part of our nature rises up,

and pleads that it may be true that Christ is a reality, and that all the aspirations and yearnings of the soul, and all its joys in anticipation, may not be as a baseless vision.

This is a true evidence. Though it is as possible to pervert it as any other evidence; though a heated imagination may suppose itself to know in whom it has trusted, and be mistaken; yet all things of this kind do not work any diminution in the force of the reality. Where one is in the upper moods, in the deepest moods, in the best moods; where the soul is most aroused in its noblest parts; where Christ appears to us, and says individually to us, "Peace be unto you;" or where he speaks other words of love, and all things respond to the divine touch—there is evidence which no man can gainsay, who wishes to know himself. It may not be evidence to you that another believes it, but that should be the best evidence to you which you have in yourself.

The highest evidence of Christ and his divinity can only be given to one person at a time. It is gathered out of each person's own heart-life and heart-experience. I think I may say fearlessly and joyfully that hundreds and thousands—hundreds within the scope of your knowledge—have lived with this inward testimony of a risen Christ in their own moral experience, and have lived above the world, you being witnesses. You know that that noble woman, your mother, lived by the sight of something which you did not see. There was a vision to her. You remember it. What strange serenity she manifested in darkness and trouble! What wondrous sweetness of patience she exhibited under untold exasperations! What singular fidelity was shown by her when all motives to fidelity seemed gone, and every motive to the reverse conduct seemed regent! You remember that mother, that wife, that sister, who seem hanging in your memory almost like sainted spirits, who did not touch the earth so much as to soil the foot. You believe that their life was hid in Christ, and that they lived by a faith that worked by love. And would you dispossess yourself of that belief if you could? Would you take out from yourself the recollection that those who are dearest to you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as their very God, and lived and died in the strength of that faith? Would you wipe out that fact if you could?

Have you not seen persons that were not nearly connected with you; persons that were in poverty; persons that were in sickness; persons that were in all manner of misfortunes; persons that were in obscurity; persons that were eminent in suffering; persons that walked in the world almost without any of its fruitions and fruits—have you not seen such persons who yet walked victoriously and



songfully? The wretches and the outcasts are often happier than the most favored sons of fortune. It is the harp, or the viol, or the lute, that makes music in mansions of pleasure and saloons of wealth; but, after all, there is no such wondrous spiritual joy as you find in the hut and the hovel; and the dying pauper in the poorhouse may have more music in his soul than the richest son of pleasure has ever known in the resplendent mansions of his wealth.

Such arguments are but poor in statement, I know; but they are great in experience. I do not believe a sensitive, yearning moral nature can stand in the presence of one who knows in whom he has trusted, and who is full of this unconquered and unconquerable faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not be himself infected with a holy sympathy with that same faith and that same belief.

Why should men want to cast away this belief? Do men desire to cast off their raiment in winter, when ugly storms howl and rage? Do men wish to break down the door of the protecting house and let all the severity of the weather in? When hunger gnaws, do men, on a voyage, desire to hurl into the sea the food that attracts their appetite? When men are suffering the pangs of sickness, and all the throes of fever are upon them, do they desire to press away the physician's hand that bears the relieving medicine? Men covet these things. And what, in the round earth, is there that a man needs which Jesus has not offered in himself, who comes to us, not to condemn but to save, not to judge us but to love us into purity; who comes to seek and to save the lost; who speaks with matchless wisdom to those that will listen to his voice; who walks with all the grandeur of a God; who, with all the tenderness of a mother's love, goes through the scenes of earthly suffering; who, more and more marvelous to the very good, dawns again from the grave, brighter than a morning star, and sheds the beams of peace around about him; who fills all his disciples with overpowering joy; and who goes among men blessing those that believe in him though they have not seen him, relieving sickness, redeeming men from the power of misfortune, lifting them above temptation, crowning them with a holy courage, helping them to live lives of faith, and enabling them in their last hours to rejoice, the heart singing while the body perishes—the inward man being renewed while the outward man is decaying?

Who does not desire such a faith, such a holy strength, such nourishment of all that is best in him? Let them seek to hew down this shadowy truth of life who will; as for me, I stand under the branches of that holy hope of the Son of God, my Lord and my Saviour. If this be idolatry, I will face the universe with my Idol,

and will perish, if need be, in the proclamation of my confidence in Jesus Christ, the Joy and Strength of life.

“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.”

Do not be afraid, then, to trust utterly; and if you waver, if you permit your heart to be discouraged and despondent, if you fall down low, and lower, to mere physical evidence, if you abandon this testimony of the Spirit of God striving with your spirit, this moral sensibility to Jesus Christ, remember that your Master, yet one day, may say to you as he said to Thomas,

“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

On this very joyful day—a day that I love because it is joyful—let us fill our houses full of gladness. Let us to-day speak to our children of the beauty of Christ and the joyfulness of Christ. Let us banish every ray of darkness. Let us keep out every alternative thought. Let us look up. We are the children of light, on this blessed day. Our Lord is risen; he has ascended; he ever liveth to make intercession for us. Let us keep that bright side, that blossoming beauty and glory of Christ, filling our own hearts and our own habitations, to-day, full of gladness; may we say one to another, “Our Lord is risen.” And may it be in our own hearts that he shall have risen—risen never again to go down, but to give us light in life, in death, and in immortality.



### PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Grant unto us, this morning, our heavenly Father, that invitation of the Spirit, that welcome, by which we shall know that we are remembered. We cannot bridge the distance between us and thee, ourselves. Nor have we strength to fly through all the space. We cannot lift ourselves into the conception of thy glory, nor of the estate of the blessed. Condescend unto us, thou that dost seek and save the lost. Come to us, and bring us the suggestion of thy life, of thy love, of thine holy habitation, and of the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Illumine our hearts, to-day, that we may not be discouraged in our pilgrimage; that we may not count the truth, by which we have thus far been sustained, as a cunningly devised fable; that it may not elude our thought, nor escape the grasp of our nature day by day. For we need to have a perpetual resurrection in ourselves of faith and hope and love. And we rejoice to come to thee this morning—the morning that brings to us, tenderly and afresh, the concourse of thoughts and prayers and joys of all thy people throughout the earth. We desire to come to thee this morning, when before our minds rises clearly the thought of thy triumph, of thy blessed resurrection, of thy supreme and serene joy, and of the bewildering fear and gladness and struggle of all thy disciples, who lost thee, and found thee, and knew it not. We desire to come to thee this morning, O, our ascended Saviour! Thou that hast said that thy Father

was our Father, and that thy God was our God; thou that has bound us unto thee by the ties of love and promise; thou that hast witnessed to us a thousand times, in thought and in feeling; thou that hast twined thyself around about the experiences, most sacred, of our inward life; thou that hast sustained us in outward conflict and in trouble; thou that hast helped us to seek our household, as we do our joy, with the heavenly light; thou that hast sent us stars to shine in the hours of our darkness; thou that hast taught us to love, and all the meaning of loving, and its everlasting course—we draw near to thee to rejoice, and offer thanksgiving; to make known all our gladness, not in words (for no language can speak that which our hearts can experience) but by laying our souls open to thy sight. We draw near to thee, this morning, as our Brother, our Exemplar, our Friend above all friends, our Leader, our Forerunner, our Mediator, our Saviour, our God. And we give to thee all that we can give to any. When we have cast before thee our thought of reverence, and of worship, and of fidelity, and our innermost affection, there is nothing left—nothing stronger, nor purer, nor higher—that we can offer to any other one. It is to thee, and yet to the Father. It is to thee, and yet to the Spirit. We do not understand the mystery of the God-head. We know that when our hearts are lifted up to worship thee, there is no jealousy between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and that all the little we can do, is accepted with infinite grace. For as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. And thou dost pity our ignorance, and our want of scope in understanding. Though we are entangled in many thoughts, and find the places that are void and that are dark to be vast in comparison with the points of light in true knowledge, we know enough to love; and there is everlasting ground. We love thee, O Lord Jesus Christ. as thou hast taught us to love. We are as branches of the vine. We take from thee our nutriment. We bring forth fruit by reason of that which thou dost give unto us. We are saved by thee, and yet by ourselves also. For thou dost work in us to will and to do of thy good pleasure.

And we beseech of thee, O Lord our God, that thou wilt grant, this morning, that every one in thy presence may have fresh occasion to bless thee. We pray that thou wilt grant, that every one, this morning, may be able to consecrate himself afresh in love to Him that loved him even unto death, and has now risen, and is on high a pleading Saviour. Grant, we pray thee, that every one this morning may be able to overcome fear and easily besetting sin, and to lay aside every weight, and renounce every form of sin whatsoever, and to draw near with humble boldness unto thee, to receive thy blessing, and to rejoice in thee.

And may we again, this morning, begin with fresh zeal, with a new and holier hope, with more radiant aspiration, and with a purer faith, to serve thee. We commend ourselves to thee, thou All-seeing Love, by reason of our weakness. Thou knowest it altogether. Better than we know, thou knowest all these things, and all other things that relate to our welfare. And we commend ourselves to thee by reason of our infirmities. Thou knowest them. And we commend ourselves to thee by reason of our sins. Thou knowest transgression. Thou dost perfectly understand where weakness ends, and where transgression begins. Thou seest what things have been treasured up, and what sin upon sin has been committed. We do not attempt to hide ourselves. It is in the searching of thine eye that we have help. We cannot live except under thy forgiveness, and in thy great grace. And we plead, this morning, not what thou hast done, but what thou art. We plead, not thy history upon earth, but thy heart in heaven. We plead, not thine atoning work, but the love which led thee to atone, which ever lives, and which is a living power. We plead God in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto himself.



And we beseech of thee that it may not be in our own strength, for one single moment, that we shall fancy that we stand, but altogether in the love and tenderness, in the pity and fidelity, in the great grace, of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour. And who shall harm us if we stand thus encircled by thine arm. Who need fear to live, who need fear to die, who need fear to appear before the judgment seat, that has thy protection? If we are in thee, what can harm us? Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

And we pray that thou wilt quicken those that love thee, to love more. Comfort those who are beginning to experience affection. Though it be little, may it be as the morning star. And we pray that they may have, day by day, renewed and increasing experience of the goodness of Christ to them.

If there are those, this morning, who feel that they have fallen back and unwrapped themselves with carnal and secular influences, and who desire, to-day, to cast off all earthly incumbrances, and renew their consecration, oh! as they stretch out their hands in desire and prayer, hear thou them, and bring them in with great grace and lenity, very near to thyself. And may they hear thee call them by name. And may they honor thee. And may they rejoice in thee with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

And we pray that thou wilt lead to a knowledge of Christ those who are without God and without hope in the world. Why, at this blessed time, irradiated with so much hope and joy, should any be without their portion?

Oh! deliver those that are bound, and those that are ensnared, and those that are out of the way, and bring them again to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. And unite us together, not outwardly, but in the inward and spiritual communion which thou dost grant unto thy children. Encouraged by the same hope, actuated by the same purposes, tried by the same temptations, falling under the dominion of the same sins, and redeemed from their thrall by the same precious love and faithfulness, may we all walk together in unity, more and more united by charity, as we draw near to the golden gate. And by and by, when we shall, one by one, step out from this earthly life, may we hear the sounds of heaven; and may they be as music to us; and may all our darkness disappear; and may the light that shall know no dimness, dawn upon us, and extend from horizon to horizon.

And in thy presence, and in the presence of all those whom we have lost, but shall be found again; with the general assembly, and with the Church of the first-born; with spirits of the just made perfect—in this company of the redeemed, ourselves redeemed, we will give the praise of our salvation to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*

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